

## What is folate?

Folate is a B vitamin.

## What is folic acid?

Folic acid is the synthetic form of this vitamin. It is used in vitamin supplements and fortified foods.

On food labels, the Daily Value refers to total folate, regardless of the form it is in.



# folate

## Why is folate important?

- Helps produce DNA and RNA, the blueprints used to make new cells in the body
- Helps produce normal red blood cells and prevent anemia
- Helps prevent birth defects such as spina bifida
- Helps prevent changes or damage to DNA
- May protect against heart disease



## How much is enough?

Men and women need 400 mcg of Dietary Folate Equivalent (DFE) daily. Pregnant women need 600 mcg and breastfeeding women need 500 mcg.

Intake of supplemental folic acid should not exceed 1,000 mcg/day to prevent folic acid from masking symptoms of vitamin B<sub>12</sub> deficiency. Older adults are at greater risk of having a B<sub>12</sub> deficiency.

## Which foods contain folate?

Folate is found naturally in dry beans and peas, leafy greens, and some fruits and vegetables. Folic acid is found in enriched cereals and grain products, such as bread, flour, cornmeal, pasta, and rice.



## Outstanding Sources

(200 or more mcg DFE)

- 1 ounce chicken livers
- 1 serving cereal, ready-to-eat, fortified to 50%-100% of the Daily Value (see serving size on product label)

## Excellent Sources

(100 - 199 mcg DFE)

- 1 serving cereal, ready-to-eat, fortified to 25% of the Daily Value (most brands) (see serving size on product label)
- 1 10-inch tortilla, flour, soft, enriched
- ½ cup lentils, cooked
- ½ cup chickpeas (garbanzo beans), cooked
- 5-6 spears asparagus, cooked
- ½ cup cowpeas (black-eyed peas), cooked
- ½ cup navy, pinto, black beans, cooked
- 2-3 oz beef liver
- 8 oz orange juice made from frozen concentrate
- ½ cup spinach, frozen, cooked



## Good Sources

(40 - 99 mcg DFE)

- ½ cup chickpeas (garbanzo beans), canned
- ½ cup Brussels sprouts, frozen, cooked
- 1 cup romaine lettuce
- ½ cup rice, white, enriched
- ½ cup macaroni, spaghetti, enriched, cooked
- ½ cup kidney beans, canned
- ½ avocado, Florida or California
- ½ cup split peas, cooked
- ½ cup collards, frozen, cooked
- ½ cup mustard greens, cooked
- ½ cup green peas, frozen, cooked
- ½ cup corn, canned
- 1 medium artichoke

Follow the Food Guide Pyramid and choose folate-rich foods to get the folate you need.

**ELEMENTS** of  
**HEALTHY EATING** series

## True or False?

Cooking folate-rich foods can reduce or destroy folate.

**True.** Food processing and preparations can destroy 50-90 percent of the folate in food.

## to get the most folate ...

Eat fruits and vegetables raw or cook as quickly as possible until just tender.

Cook fruits and vegetables in a small amount of water or no water.

Steam, microwave, or stir-fry.

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## thinking about having a baby?

Getting enough folate right before and after you become pregnant, protects against a number of birth defects. Pregnant women who get too little folate have a greater risk of having a baby with neural tube defects, such as spina bifida. (In an embryo, the neural tube becomes the spinal cord.) A good folate intake is important very early in the first trimester. Because women often don't know they're pregnant right away, most women should eat folate-rich foods and get 400 mcg of folic acid from fortified foods or a supplement daily.

## the recipe

### Seven Layer Salad

#### Ingredients:

½ head each, lettuce and romaine broken in small pieces	1 sm package thawed green peas
½ red onion, thinly sliced	1 sm green pepper, chopped
1 cup cooked pasta shells	½ lb ham, cubed
	½ lb swiss cheese, shredded

#### Dressing:

1 cup mayonnaise  
2 to 2½ teaspoon dill

#### Directions:

1. Make dressing ahead and chill; Mix mayonnaise with dill.
2. In a large bowl, layer salad items one at a time beginning with lettuce.
3. Add dressing just before serving. Add a little at a time to coat lightly or as desired.